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To defend national sovereignty against the menace of international finance

Volume 73. Number 5. **August 2005**

The Secret People

by G. K. Chesterton

SMILE at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget.
For we are the people of England, that never have spoken yet
There is many a fat farmer that drinks less cheerfully.
There is many a free French peasant who is richer and sadder than we.
There are no folk in the whole world so helpless or so wise.
There is hunger in our bellies, there is laughter in our eyes;
You laugh at us and love us, both mugs and eyes are wet:
Only you do not know us. For we have not spoken yet.

The fine French kings came over in a flutter of flags and dames.
We liked their smiles and battles, but we never could say their names.
The blood ran red to Bosworth and the high French lords went down;
There was naught but a naked people under a naked crown.
And the eyes of the King's Servants turned terribly every way,
And the gold of the King's Servants rose higher every day.
They burnt the homes of the shaven men, that had been quaint and kind,
Till there was no bed in a monk's house, nor food that man could find.
The inns of God where no man paid, that were the wall of the weak,
The King's Servants ate them all. And still we did not speak.

And the face of the King's Servants grew greater than the King:
He tricked them, and they trapped him, and stood round him in a ring.
The new grave lords closed round him, that had eaten the abbey's fruits,
And the men of the new religion, with their bibles in their boots,
We saw their shoulders moving, to menace or discuss,
And some were pure and some were vile; but none took heed of us.
We saw the King as they killed him, and his face was proud and pale;
And a few men talked of freedom, while England talked of ale.

A war that we understood not came over the world and woke
Americans, Frenchmen, Irish; but we knew not the things they spoke.
They talked about rights and nature and peace and the people's reign:
And the squires, our masters, bade us fight; and never scorned us again.
Weak if we be for ever, could none condemn us then;
Men called us serfs and drudges; men knew that we were men.
In foam and flame at Trafalgar, on Albeura plains,
We did and died like lions, to keep ourselves in chains
We lay in living ruins; firing and fearing not
The strange fierce face of the Frenchman who knew for what they fought,
And the man who seemed to be more than man we strained against and broke;
And we broke our own rights with him. And still we never spoke.

Our patch of glory ended; we never heard guns again.
But the squire seemed struck in the saddle; he was foolish, as if in pain.
He leaned on a staggering lawyer, he clutched a cringing Jew,
He was stricken; it may be, after all, he was stricken at Waterloo.
Or perhaps the shades of the shaven men, whose spoil is in his house,
Come back in shining shapes at last to spoil his last carouse:
We only know the last sad squires ride slowly towards the sea,
And a new people takes the land: and still it is not we.

They have given us into the hand of new unhappy lords,
Lords without anger and honour, who dare not carry their swords.
They fight by shuffling papers; they have bright dead alien eyes;
They look at our labour and laughter as a tired man looks at flies.
And the load of their loveless pity is worse than the an-

cient wrongs,
Their doors are shut in the evening; and they know no songs.

We hear men speaking for us of new laws strong and sweet,
Yet is there no man speaketh as we speak in the street.
It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose the first,
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath and our wrath be the worst.
It may be we are meant to mark with our riot and our rest
God's scorn for all men governing. It may be beer is best.
But we are the people of England; and we have not spoken yet.
Smile at us, pay us, pass us.
But do not quite forget.

* * * *

The 21st of October, 2005, will be the 200th anniversary of Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar.

A date that, in memory, was only about as distant to those who fought in World War I, as 1914 is to us.

My point here is not so much about what we fought for, it wasn't for "us", it is about who we were and may be again.

Die-soft Tories, such as those controlling the Countryside Alliance, constantly quote but *never* in its entirety, from ***The Secret People***. They dare not for shame! They either do not understand, or deny, the full power of the lines.

We have been at war for a very long time now and there has never been any excuse for playing political patty-fingers with a disgusting enemy. For soiling ourselves with the democratic process is to have already lost.

We have always been on our own.

We must acknowledge that our history did not begin with democracy. Indeed it may be said that it ended *in* democracy.

For now.... *C.T.*

Trafalgar 2005

"Order the signal Hardy."
"Aye, aye sir."
"Hold on, that's not what I dictated to the signal officer. What's the meaning of this?"
"Sorry, Sir?"
"'England expects every person to do his duty, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion or disability.' What gobbledygook is this?"
"Admiralty policy, I'm afraid, sir. We're an equal opportunities employer now. Had the devil's own job getting 'England' past the censors, lest it be considered racist."
"Gadzooks, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco."
"Sorry sir. All naval vessels have been designated smoke-free working environments."
"In that case, break open the rum ration. Let us splice the main brace to steel the men before battle."
"The rum ration has been abolished, Admiral. It's part of the Government's policy on binge drinking."
"Good heavens, Hardy. I suppose we'd better get on with it. Full speed ahead."
"I think you'll find that there's a 4 knot speed limit on this stretch of water."
"Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in history. We must advance with all dispatch. Report from the crow's nest, please."
"That won't be possible, sir."
"What?"
"Health and safety have closed the crow's nest, sir. No harness, and they said that rope ladder doesn't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until a proper scaffolding can be erected."
"Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay Hardy."
"He's busy knocking up a wheelchair access to the fo'c'sle Admiral."
"Wheelchair access? I've never heard anything so absurd."
"Health and safety again, sir. We have to provide a barrier-free environment for the differently abled.
"Differently abled? I've only one arm and one eye and I refuse to even hear mention of the word. I didn't rise to the rank of Admiral by playing the disability card."
"Actually, sir, you did. The Royal navy is under-represented in the areas of visual impairment and limb deficiency."
"Whatever next? Give me full sail. The salt spray beckons."
" A couple of problems there too, sir. Health and safety won't let the crew up the rigging without crash helmets. And they don't want anyone breathing in too much salt—haven't you seen the adverts?"
"I've never heard such infamy. Break out the cannon and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy."
"The men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral."
"What? This is mutiny!"
"It's not that, sir. It's just that they're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill anyone. There's a couple of legal aid lawyers on board, watching everyone like hawks."
"Then how are we to sink the Frenchies and the Spanish?"
"Actually, sir, we're not."
"We're not?"
"No, sir. The Frenchies and the Spanish are our European partners now. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, we shouldn't even be in this stretch of water. We could get hit with a claim for compensation."
"But you must hate the Frenchman as you hate the devil."
"I wouldn't let the ships diversity coordinator hear you saying that, sir. You'll be up on disciplinary."
"You must consider every man an enemy who speaks ill of your King."
"Not any more, sir. We must be inclusive in this multicultural age. Now put on your Kevlar vest; it's the rule."
"Don't tell me—health and safety. Whatever happened to rum, sodomy and the lash?"
"As I explained, sir, rum is off the menu. And there's a ban on corporal punishment."
"What about sodomy?"
"I believe it is to be encouraged, sir."
"In that case, kiss me, Hardy."

Anon. Royal Navy.

The Autonomous Jewish Region of Birobidjan: or The Other Israel

A Realistic Answer to the Jewish Problem?

By Colin Todd & Hereward More

JAR—Jewish Autonomous Republic (of Birobidjan)

THE FORGOTTEN JEWISH STATE

How many of us have heard of The **Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidjan**? A Jewish self-governing entity in the far east of Siberia. Not many. Many Jews are also totally unaware of the JAR.

Very occasionally a story from the region will make the news, as for example when the Russian federal government decided recently that it would return thousands of rare books relating to Jewish cultural and religious matters to the region, after they had been found in KGB archives; or else from time to time there will be a 'general interest' piece on the JAR in the mass media or in the Jewish press as in *The Daily Telegraph*, by Julius Strauss, of 17th August, 2004.

Established by Stalin in 1934 Birobidjan is six time zones from Moscow, just north of the border with China and not far from the Pacific Ocean. (There are various spellings for Birobidjan. I have used the most common accepted throughout this article. Originally Biro-Bidzhan— it derives its name from the two tributaries of the Amur river—Bira and Bidzhan.) It was once home to a thriving Jewish community but now only a few thousand Jews are left. Most had forgotten their native Yiddish and were reluctant to profess their religion. Now, according to the *Telegraph*, "just as it seemed that the Stalinist attempt to create a socialist Israel in the wilderness would fade into history, local Jews have effected a remarkable revival, fuelled by a thriving economy, money from foreign Jewish groups and a return from Israel of disillusioned migrants.

"Fifteen years ago Jewish life here was disappearing,' said Valery Guryevich, the deputy head of the Jewish Autonomous Republic of Birobidjan. 'This year (2004) *for the first time we have more Jews coming back from Israel than leaving*.'

"Isa Promushkin, 68, and his wife, Tsila, 65, are among 300 émigrés who have returned this year. They left with their sons, Roman, 42, and Misha, 40, five years ago but became disillusioned with the Israeli jobs market, the lack of security and the gap between *their Yiddish cultural roots and Hebrew-dominated Israel*.

"Mr Promushkin said: 'There we lived in a one-room flat. Here we have a three-room flat. In Israel people just sit on benches all day. They don't know what it is to pick berries and mushrooms. *And the climate is better here*.'"(My emphasis throughout. Ed.)

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS

The founding of the JAR in 1934 was not a unique attempt to create a Jewish homeland on Russian territory.

From 1791 onward a "Pale of Settlement" was created after Catherine II of Russia issued a decree limiting all Jewish residence to either the territories annexed from Poland along the western border or to the territories taken from the Turks along the shores of the Black Sea. Jews were to be barred from 'old' Russia.

In April, 1835, Czar Nicholas I, decreed that the Pale of Settlement should encompass present day Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Ukraine, Moldavia, and other regions West of Russia. This, with minor modifications, remained Russian policy until 1917 when the Bolshevik revolution removed all restrictions on Jews from the statute books.

We should mention that before the failed revolution of 1905 Lenin promised his allies of the Jewish Bund (General Jewish Labour Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia) a true Jewish homeland. This promise was not kept after the Bolshevik success of 1917.

WHY THE JAR?

FOR AND AGAINST

"The Soviet Government, in keeping with its principle of federalism, providing equal rights and duties, privileges and opportunities for all racial, national and lingual groups; and the promotion of their cultural autonomy and native self-government decreed that the Jewish population of the U.S.S.R. should have its own territory, on which to develop its Yiddish vernacular and the culture pertaining to it, and to entitle it to territorial Jewish representation in the supreme Government organs." (*VALLENTINE'S JEWISH ENCYCLOPAEDIA*. London. 1938.)

In the 1920's the Committee for the Agricultural Settlement of Jewish Toilers (known as Kozmet) had plans to found Jewish colonies in the fertile regions of Southern Russia in order to implement this decree; however, they met with opposition from a population that had yet to be subdued by the purges and famines of later years, and were forced to look to the East, eventually settling upon the area that was to become Birobidjan.

[1]The three principal reasons given for the experiment

which led to the establishment of a Jewish territorial unit in the Soviet Far East were:

"**1.** To bring about a solution of Russia's Jewish problem by giving the Jews a real homeland and thus creating a Jewish nation. According to the official Stalinist definition there can be no nation without a territory of its own. Thus if the Jews were given a district in Russia where they could establish a compact settlement and a cultural centre, so the Bolsheviks argued, they would automatically become a nation.

"**2.** To arouse sympathy among the Jewish people throughout the world for the experiment of a 'Soviet Jewish State' and for the Soviet Union in general or at least to neutralize anti-Soviet Jewish elements abroad.

"**3.** To increase the defence potential of the Soviet State by recruiting settlers for an exposed Far Eastern border and to provide more manpower for the Soviet Far East in general. It was assumed that Jewish settlers would be as reliable as Russian ones at an important strategical point where the decisive struggle for the domination of the Far East might flare up one day."

It should be explained here that Soviet Jewry were far from united in their support for the Birobidjan experiment and still less were Jewry at large. A number of prominent Jewish communists were positively hostile to the scheme from the outset, noting that the JAR was to be established under the over-arching authority of the Soviet Executive, rather than under independent and exclusively Jewish auspices; indeed, as Walter Kolarz explains in the following extract from his book, the scheme was to be sponsored by the peasant leader Mikhail Kalinin, a man not well known for his pro-Jewish sentiments (and, hence, relegated to honorary but largely powerless positions in the Soviet hierarchy, but that as they say is another story). They saw it as being a concession to the anti-Jewish instincts and traditions of the Russian people, and feared that a Jewish homeland would very soon become a Jewish prison, to which they would be confined, rendering them incapable of exercising any more influence over the direction of Soviet affairs than any of the other peoples of the USSR (as matters stood there were Jewish 'representatives' from a number of Soviet provinces and republics on the Executive, and still more on the various Communist Party committees that gave the administration its mandate). Furthermore, they found the idea of honest agriculture most unappealing, stating that Birobidjan might be a suitable country for pioneer settlers with agricultural traditions, "but not for a people like the Jews which had only just started to engage in farming". Anyway, if the Jews, or any of the Jews were to farm somewhere (and it must be understood that they were certainly <u>not</u> conceding that it was desirable that any great number of Jews should do so), then they should do it on the great and fertile plains of Ukraine and the Crimea (areas whose populations had been either liquidated, exiled or subjected to forced labour on expropriated land already, or been earmarked for such action in the near future); and the funds allocated to the Birobidjan project should be used to enable them to do so with greater ease.

At the outset, Jews outside the Soviet Union made very little comment on the Birobidjan experiment as such, perhaps seeing the establishment of the JAR and the controversy surrounding it as a question of internal politics for the USSR and certainly not wishing to distract from the Zionist *strategic* mission of occupying Palestine and, eventually, Jerusalem. At any rate, the Executive appears to have been successful in its aim of 'neutralizing' anti-Soviet Jewish elements abroad; and the USSR continued to receive financial support from Jewish interests in Europe and the USA, which would not have been the case had there been widespread apprehension that Birobidjan would become a 'mega-ghetto'. However, Jewry in general was divided between the separatists of the Jewish nationalist Zionist movement (itself divided between those who would accept a Jewish state anywhere, and those who were for 'Palestine or bust') on the one hand; and the cosmopolites of the internationalist socialist/communist movement, with their policy of pervasion. That the Birobidjan project did not sit easily with the aims of either movement made it somewhat difficult to popularise, but perhaps also ensured that it would not be allowed to fail as it was 'second best' for Jews on both sides of the debate. Of course, that position ensured that once one, or it might have been both (our reader must decide for now, as it would take another ream of articles to argue out the point), of the factions had achieved its 'best' option in the post-war years, Birobidjan would become an irrelevance for both.

"KALININ DECLARATION VERSUS BALFOUR DECLARATION"

"The Jewish Autonomous Province of Birobidjan could not simply be created by a stroke of the pen as other Autonomous Provinces and Republics had been. The Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the U.S.S.R. had to proceed by stages. The settlement of Jews in Birobidjan had to be encouraged before the formation of a Jewish territorial unit became possible. The first step taken by the TsIK was the decree of March 28th, 1928, 'reserving' Birobidjan for Jewish colonization.

"The second move was made on September 30th, 1931, when the Soviet Government pledged its word that a special Jewish administrative territorial unit would be formed in Birobidjan if settlements of Jewish toilers developed successfully in that area. Only on May 7th, 1934, was the Jewish Autonomous Province (JAR) actually created. Soviet propaganda described the decree bringing the Jewish Province into being as the 'Kalinin Declaration' to demonstrate that Birobidjan was to be a challenge to 'Bourgeois Zionism' and to the Balfour Declaration on which the Jewish National Home in Palestine was based.

"The name of Kalinin, the President of the U.S.S.R., was by no means wrongly associated with the Birobidjan scheme. Kalinin was, indeed, the only important Soviet leader who took a really active and constructive interest in Birobidjan and in the Jewish question in Russia in general.

"Whilst Stalin, the great specialist on nationality problems, seemed to ignore the Birobidjan project completely, Kalinin would always speak with great warmth of what he looked upon as the nucleus of a Soviet Jewish State. Kalinin, a peasant's son, advocated more than anybody else in Russia the return of the Jews to the land. He thought that the Jews could never develop into a fully-fledged nation so long as they lived in towns only, least of all the Moscow Jews living in an international city where national peculiarities were bound to be effaced. Kalinin was by no means sentimental about the Jewish question. In his persistent efforts to create the Jewish territorial unit within the U.S.S.R. *he was guided by a sober appreciation of the importance of the Jewish factor within the capitalistic world.* (My emphasis. Ed.) For him the Jews constituted 'one of the most lively and politically most influential na-

tions', and it was therefore, important for the cause of the revolution that the Jewish middle classes throughout the capitalistic countries should be inspired by a friendly feeling toward the Soviet Union. Kalinin's hopes were perhaps not altogether in vain, for the Jews abroad, particularly those in the United States[2], contributed financially towards the Birobidjan experiment.

"The Soviet Government was clearly determined to make the most of Birobidjan in its propaganda both inside and outside Russia. Within the Soviet Union Ozet (Society for the agricultural settlement of Jewish Toilers) organised mass meetings in the early thirties voicing the slogan 'The whole Soviet Union is building the Jewish Autonomous Province'. For both foreign and home consumption Soviet propaganda stated that the foundation of the Jewish Autonomous Province heralded the dawn of a 'splendid future' of the Jewish people.

"A statement by the TsIK published on August 29th, 1936, under the visible influence of Birobidjan's great protector, Mikhail Kalinin, even said that for the first time in history the Jewish people saw their burning desire fulfilled, namely, 'to create for themselves a homeland, to have a national State of their own'. After recalling that the deeds by which Jewish collective farmers received land in perpetuity were written in the Yiddish language the statement added 'The Jewish Autonomous Province will become the centre of national Jewish culture for the entire Jewish working class of the Soviet Union'. According to the official plan the greatest and most popular Jewish artists, writers and scientists of the Soviet Union were to leave Moscow, Leningrad and other big Russian cities and go to Birobidjan 'for permanent work in the Autonomous Province'. Jewish historians and linguistic scholars in particular were urged to settle down in Birobidjan 'to build up scientific Jewish institutions, for research into Jewish history, language and literature and into the Jewish Autonomous Province itself'. In short, Birobidjan City, Birofeld and Waldheim, then major localities of the Province, were to become the centres of Jewish life of the Soviet Union instead of Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa, Kiev and Kharkov."

SETTLEMENT & RESOURCES

Let us now look at the history of settlement in the JAR and touch on the relatively untapped resources of the Region.

From the earliest times the territory of Priamurye, as it was known before, was home to a few tribes (the Daurs, Duchers, Tunguses). From the middle of the 17th century a gradual move into the Priamurye by the Russians began. In 1644 Vassily Poyarkov led an expedition into the region and reported that "those lands are crowded, full of bread and sables, and there are lots of other animals, and those rivers are full of fish". The area acquired a 'Wild West' reputation and was occupied by fugitive Cossacks, entrepreneurs and peasants.

However, understanding that Russia needed an outlet to the Pacific Ocean and needed the navigable river Amur, treaties were signed with the Chinese in 1858 and 1860 giving Russia authority over Priamurye.

In 1898 the construction of a railway line from Chita to Vladivostok was started. By 1916 the line had reached Khabarovsk city. The region was now connected to the Trans-Siberian Railway.

The territory was the scene of severe and bloody fighting during the Russian Civil War between the White and Red Armies. 1917-22. The region declined economically and the effort to restore it took until 1926-7.

"At the beginning of 1928 Birobidjan had a population of only 34,000. 80% Russians, 6.8% Byelorussians, 10% Koreans, 1.6% Chinese and 1% Nanai and Evenki.

There were less than 3 people per square mile in Birobidjan and it was, therefore, highly desirable from the point of view of the Soviet State that somebody should fill the empty space of *that fertile corner of the Russian Far East, where climate was healthy, arable soil excellent and the land rich in timber, coal and minerals*."[3]

Settlement of Jews began slowly and over the years the figures would leap and then dive, often with many more Jews emigrating than were arriving. In 1929-1, 420, in 1930-1, 186, in 1931-3, 230 settlers arrived. Not all were real pioneer settlers; a number went to villages which had been founded by Ukrainian settlers but since abandoned. With 1932 immigration finally assumed a mass character. 8,200 Jews arrived. But the very numbers led to a crisis in the administration. Between 1928 and 1932 some 50% of the Jewish settlers were to leave the prospective JAR. The region was, however developing quickly economically and on May 7th 1934, the region accepted the decree transforming it into the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidjan in the USSR. Kalinin blamed the leadership of the JAR for not encouraging settlers; failing to appreciate the importance of agriculture; and for paying insufficient attention to settling Jewish colonists on the land, allowing too many to converge on the towns. Sackings and 'liquidations' followed among the party apparatchiks.

This was followed by an influx of specialists, agriculturalists and engineers. Also foreign volunteers began to arrive. They came from the United States, Argentina, Belgium, France, Germany, in larger numbers from Poland and Lithuania and even from Palestine.

Between 1928 and 1937 the city of Birobidjan was built around the railway station of Tikhonkaya and became the administrative, economic and cultural centre of the JAR.

With WWII the economy of the JAR was geared to war production and produced ammunition, tyres and uniforms along with other materials.

The post-war years brought a great influx of Jews into the JAR. In 1942 the total population of the region was 100,000, almost 50% of whom were Jews. By 1948 the total population had risen to 185,000. The number of Jewish colonists had undoubtedly increased considerably, and these were to be the most prosperous years for Jewish culture in the JAR. It is said that in the streets of Birobidjan city and in many villages and settlements Yiddish was heard as often as Russian.

While, the JAR saw steady improvements economically, numerically the Jewish population seemed to be in terminal decline. Those who could headed for the 'land of milk and honey', the USA, while others went to Israel. Throughout the '60s, '70s and '80s new industrial enterprises were created and old ones updated. Ironically more attention was now paid to agriculture in the JAR and the production of wheat, meat and milk increased greatly. Drainage projects cleared more swamp land for agriculture, creating new state farms.

By the 1990s the JAR was ready to stand on its own and in 1991 the Jewish Autonomous Region became a full partner in the Russian Federation.

DOES IT STILL EXIST?

"Does it still exist?" is the response that the few who have heard of the JAR have given me when I have mentioned our research and this article.

One usually reads that the JAR is either dying, dead, or never was: A cynical paper exercise in propaganda, an attempt to con Jews in the affluent West into donating hard currency toward the welfare of their hostage co-religionists; a pipe-dream; a failed experiment.

Perhaps not quite; and just to prove that the JAR is alive and even thriving, its 70th anniversary of foundation last year was greeted by laudatory messages and addresses from Russia's political, social and religious leaders, including President Putin and Jewish billionaire Roman Abramovich, Governor of the Chkotka Autonomous Region (best known as the owner of Chelsea Football Club in London).

Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin
"I heartily congratulate citizens of the Jewish Autonomous Region on 70 years of its formation. Here people of various nationalities and religions live and work in harmony. It is important that you keep and increase your traditions of good neighbourly relations and mutual respect.
Nowadays the region (JAR) has considerable resources for dynamic development in all fields. I hope effective realisation of the Region's potential will let you accomplish a lasting social and economic rise and improving quality of life. I wish you success, good health and all the best!"

THE PRESENT SITUATION

"Just before Rosh Hashana, 2002, Chabad[4] Rabbi Mordechai Scheiner and his wife, Esther, arrived from Israel to take over religious leadership of the city's Jewish population,..."

"On September, 10, 2004, Birobidjan's elegant new synagogue was formally dedicated. JAR Governor Nikolai Volkov cut the ribbon together with Russia's Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar in a gala ceremony that highlighted the close relations between the government and the local Jewish community."

"...new synagogue and Jewish community centre light up the night sky with enormous green and blue neon Stars of David. The local *Birobidzhaner Stern* publishes a weekly Yiddish section, Yiddish and Jewish culture are taught in the public schools, and government documents are printed in Russian and Yiddish..."

"Birobidjan today is a lovely, green city. Its wide, recently paved boulevards and tree-lined streets bear witness to the economic boom enjoyed by the entire Russian Far East. Deputy Governor Gurevich notes the GNP (Gross National Product) has increased 50 percent in the past four years, and says, salaries have gone up even more..."[5]

It is evident that the JAR is here to stay as a component part of the federal state that is modern Russia. Despite some complaints about a falling off of the initial interest in the Russian far-east shown in the west immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, the region appears to be thriving, and is both economically and politically stable. The natural resources of the region remain somewhat under-exploited, as the wartime and post-war industries centred upon Birobidjan have tended to rely upon its manpower, rather than its mineral wealth. As with much of the old Soviet bloc, the poverty of the region, and the indifference of its governors to the well-being of its inhabitants, would seem to have conspired to leave it with more 'sustainable' agricultural methods than those of western agribusiness.

A REAL SOLUTION?

Birobidjan appears to be doing very well for itself; it is not an unpleasant country, and has every prospect of offering its inhabitants a bright future in agriculture, mining, industry or the tourist trade. At no stage after the creation of the JAR could it have been said that its people were in any particular way worse off than anyone else in the Soviet Union. Its more longstanding Jewish residents point out that the notion of their having to suffer any anti-Jewish prejudice in the JAR would have been a laughable paradox; and Deputy Governor Gurevich remembers that even after the proportion of non-Jews had begun to rise in the 1970's, the Jewish culture and character of the region remained so strong that, "even the Russians cursed in Yiddish!".

So, in discussing the JAR as a possible answer to the Jewish Problem, either past, present or future, there can be no scope for anyone to level charges of harbouring hatred for the Jews, or desiring to make them suffer, indeed, no-one could benefit more from an equitable solution to the Jewish Problem than the Jewish people themselves.

Their landless condition has meant that the Jews haye been able to survive only by exploiting the resources of the various peoples with which they have come in contact, inevitably provoking hostility and defensive action. The only real solution to this is the establishment of a Jewish homeland (or set of homelands), in which (the vast majority of) the Jewish race will actually reside as an alternative, not in addition to their *current* dispersal throughout the world. It was precisely such a homeland that both Kalinin's Birobidjan and (in its original inception) Herzl's Israel were supposed to provide; both have failed to solve the Problem.

The difference between the two models lies in the question of autonomy: Ought the Jewish people to have sovereign freedom in their dealings with the gentile nations; or are they to rule only over their own affairs and be subject to suzerain authority in their interaction with the world at large? The former is the Israeli option, under which the Jews are able to continue relations with other nations on the basis of mutual hostility, aggression, exploitation, suspicion and deceit already established. The latter is the JAR/ Birobidjan option, under which the donors of the land exercise an element of oversight towards the activities of the Jewish people, tutoring them in the ways of the comity of nations at least until such time as the wrongs of the past shall have been forgotten and they shall be quite ready to stand beside the other nations of the earth to be recognised as a decent and honourable people; meanwhile, the 'mentor' nation will stand as a guarantor of the good faith of its Jewish subjects in their dealings with the wider world. As the Russians say, "it's plain to a hedgehog" which option is preferable, and which would be of more beneficial both to the Jews themselves and to the world at large.

In his book *The New Jerusalem*[6], G.K. Chesterton suggested that there should be a commonwealth of Jewish cantons, after the manner of Switzerland, worldwide. "Jewish colonies in suitable and selected places in adjacent parts or in many other parts of the world." This would seem to be the goal towards which the JAR option would eventually lead.

(Continued on page 7)

Ernst Zundel

Prisoner of Conscience - Now Held in German Prison. Facing 5 Year Sentence.

Ernst Zundel was arrested at his Tennessee home on February 5th, 2003, having lived peacefully for some two years in the USA and deported to Canada on February 19th. He was then held for some 2 years in solitary confinement in Toronto's West Detention Centre, as a 'security risk' under legislation brought in after the manufactured terrorist incident of 9/11, before being flown by hired Lear jet, at a cost of $50,000 plus to the Canadian tax-payer, to Germany on March 1st, 2005. (These international arrest warrants are certainly proving a useful tool/weapon as expected).

For those new to the name of Ernst Zundel here are some background details to these relatively recent events.

Ernst was born in 1939 in a small town in the Black Forest region of Germany. He emigrated to Canada at the age of 19, where he soon married and became the father of two sons. He enjoyed a successful career as a graphic artist.

Putting aside his thriving business, he dedicated himself to the great task, as he saw it, of redeeming the sullied reputation of his fellow Germans. Through his *Samisdat* publishing house (Please Note: The famous Zundelhaus at 206 Carlton Street is no more. Do NOT send mail there!) he distributed a vast quantity of books, pamphlets, newsletters and audio and video cassettes worldwide.

This, inevitably, brought the wrath of the enemies of free speech down on him.

Zundel is probably best known for his central role in the "Great Holocaust Trials" of 1985 and 1988. He was brought to trial in Toronto on a charge of "publishing false news" (almost every journalist in the world should worry about that one!) and specifically for publishing a reprint edition of the *Did Six Million Really Die?* booklet.

Zundel's two lengthy trials - the 1985 trial lasted two months, and the 1988 trial four months—have been the closest thing anywhere to full scale debates on the Holocaust issue. For the first time ever, "Holocaust survivors" and Holocaust historians were closely and critically questioned under oath about their claims and views.

Zundel was found guilty in the 1985 trial, but the verdict was set aside by the provincial appeals court. Following a retrial in May 1988 Zundel was again declared guilty by a jury following which he was sentenced to nine months imprisonment. On appeal, Canada's Supreme Court threw out the conviction, declaring on August 27, 1992, that the archaic "false news" law under which he had been convicted was a violation of the country's Charter of Rights.

Our course the professional 'revengers' were not going to let that go unanswered. The persecution was intensified and resulted in Zundel being deported from the USA where he had settled with his new bride Ingrid Rimland on the pretext that he missed an interview with immigration authorities. Which brings us back to the start of this article.

The extradition to Germany seems to relate to the fact that the internet site, www.zundelsite.org , run from the USA, but not by Ernst Zundel, can be seen in Germany. The latest I have at time of going to print is that Ernst has been charged with 'inciting racial hatred and defaming the memory of the dead'. No date for the show trial set yet.

Ernst is limited in the number of letters that he can mail out and those he can send are, naturally, primarily to loved ones and his defence team. The prison conditions in Germany sound much more civilised than Canada's. He now has a chair in his cell and is allowed to keep a tooth brush! All of this has been done to a man of 66 who, after more than 40 years in Canada and the USA, does not have a single criminal conviction. Send letters, cards and postcards of encouragement to :

Ernst Zundel
JVA Mannheim
Justiz-Vollzugsanstalt
Herzogenried Strasse 111
D 68169 Mannheim
Germany.

Let him know that he is not alone!

I received a very positive letter from Ernst, dated May 23, which arrived a week later but remember that all ingoing/outgoing mail has to be translated by the censors first. (My original letter to him took some two months to clear the system.) All donations toward his legal battles should be sent, payable, to his wife:

Ingrid Zundel
3152 Parkway #13
PMB109
Pigeon Forge,
TN 37863,
USA

NEWS....NEWS....NEWS....NEWS....NEWS....NEWS

The latest news at time of going to press is that as of July 19 Zundel has been charged with 14 counts of allegedly "inciting racial hatred." It is unclear when he will face trial. The Canadian Jewish Congress said it was "glad to hear Zundel had been charged, but said justice will not be served fully until he is convicted."

(Perhaps they may even put him on trial between times? Ed.)

Find the latest news at www.zundelsite.org

BIRODIDJAN *(Continued from page 6)*

One day, somehow, this Problem will be solved. Until then let there be as many Birobidjans as necessary.

* * * * *

(It remains to be said that the primary purpose of this article is to lift the curtain, a little, on the existence of the Jewish Autonomous Republic of Birobidjan; and not to wander any further than we need to do into the minefield of theory and history, tempting though that is.... I am sure that you all have your own thoughts on the matter. And, yes, we have a war to win first...)

NOTES

For more information see The official Government Website of the JAR of Birobidjan at http://www.eao.ru/

Footnotes & References.

[1]Quotes in both this section and the next, KALININ DECLARATION VERSUS BALFOUR DECLARATION are taken from *Russia and Her Colonies* by Walter Kolarz. London. 1952. George Philip and Son Limited.

[2]The American Birobidjan Committee, Chicago, 1936-50.

[3]*Russia and Her Colonies.*

[4]A member of a wealthy, ultra-Orthodox chassidic sect, the Lubavitch Chabad.

[5]The above quotes are from a *The Jerusalem Post* article by Sue Fishkoff., Oct 5, 2004.

[6]*The New Jerusalem.* 1920. Hodder and Stoughton.

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As many of you will be aware John Tyndall ("JT") the founder and Editor of ***Spearhead*** for more than 40 years died on the night of 18/19th July.
I salute a courageous and dedicated man. *C.T.*
According to the official website "at least one further issue of ***Spearhead*** is planned hence subscriptions are being maintained." I can only suggest that if you are not a subscriber you send a blank Postal Order for £2.00 to:
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Printed and Published by the A.K. Chesterton Trust, BM CANDOUR, London, WC1N 3XX
(Editor: Colin Todd)